



Iowa Outdoors

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RECOVERY CREWS SEARCH FOR MISSING ILLINOIS MAN

DES MOINES – A recovery operation is underway at the confluence of the Iowa and Mississippi rivers in southeast Iowa for the body of a 21 year old New Boston, Ill., man who disappeared around 4:10 p.m. Monday.

The man was wading with friends near an island in the river when he stepped into a deepwater drop off and disappeared. Larry Dessner, conservation officer with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said a divers searched the area and crews in boats dragged the section of river until 8 o'clock last night, then resumed early Tuesday morning.

“Our next step is to bring in cadaver dogs to help with the search,” Dessner said.

The Muscatine County Sheriff, the fire and rescue departments from Muscatine County, Wapello, Oakville, New Boston, Ill., Keithsburg, Ill., and the Iowa DNR is assisting the Louisa County Sheriff's Department with the recovery.

If confirmed, this would be the 26th drowning in Iowa, the most on record.

For more information, contact Mick Klemesrud at 515-281-8653.

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HUNTING TAKES CENTER STAGE AS SUMMER TURNS TO FALL

Heading into September, hunters should be working with their dogs in preparation for spending hours wading through thigh high grasses, field stubble and brush during the upcoming hunting seasons. The preseason hunting checklist should also include a few trips to the shooting range and a refresher of safe and ethical hunting practices.

“Go through the equipment, including the blaze orange clothing and make sure everything is in good working order,” suggested Dale Garner, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources wildlife bureau. “Hunters spend a lot of time thinking about hunting and telling old hunting stories. They should spend some of that time replacing the worn out gear or taking a hunter education class before the season starts.”

Garner said so far, the August roadside population survey of pheasants, quail, partridge and rabbits, has been a pleasant surprise. The fairly mild spring over much of Iowa allowed pheasants and quail to have good nest survival and more chicks hatch. There were a few pockets in the state where spring or early summer rains damaged nests. Final results for the survey will be available in early September.

Iowa’s hunting seasons begin in September and continue into April 2006. Hunters have their work cut out for them to match the safety record from 2004, when it was a fatality free year.

“Last year was excellent on the safety front with no hunting related fatalities and the lowest number of personal injuries recorded. I think we can attribute at least part of that to getting the word out about the new requirement and the importance of upland game hunters wearing blaze orange,” said Rod Slings, recreation safety program supervisor with the DNR. “I think we can also point to the increased use of a hunting plan, and hunters sticking with the plan in the field.”

Hunter education instructors have been promoting hunting plans, that outlines the role each person has in the hunt, where they will be at all times during the hunt, and where they will be hunting. The plan should include the zone of fire for each hunter – the 45-degree cone in front of each hunter that serves as the safe area in which to fire. The plan serves as a blueprint and only works if followed.

“A major point we stress when talking about safety is that hunters should never shoot at a running deer and that they should always look past their target and know what is behind it. We also say never to swing on game – meaning make a quick turn, swing the gun and fire without knowing exactly the target or what is around it,” Slings said. Shooting at a running deer is the number one result of deer hunting related injuries and fatalities.

Knowing what is behind the target should include knowing who has permission to be on the property. Since most hunting in Iowa is done on private land, hunters must receive permission from the landowner before going on the property.

“The earlier you can get permission to access the land, the better off you will be. Early September is pretty late in the game, but you can still find some land to hunt,” Garner said.

It is a good idea for hunters to get permission in writing from the landowner, outlining the property boundary and when the hunters are allowed access. “We get our share of trespass complaints,” Slings said. “Some are legitimate, and some are just a lack of communication. If hunters get permission in writing, that can clear up much of the confusion.”

Iowa Hunting Seasons

September

Sept. 1 – 15 Canada goose Cedar Rapids and Des Moines special goose zones

Sept. 1 - Jan. 31, 2006 Squirrel (Fox and Gray)

Sept. 1 - Feb. 28, 2006 Rabbit (Cottontail)

Sept. 3 – Nov. 27 Snipe statewide

Sept. 3 – Nov. 11 Rail (Sora and Virginia) statewide

Sept. 10 – 11 Canada goose statewide

Sept. 17 - Oct. 2 Deer – Youth (ages 12 to- 15) and Severely Disabled Hunter

Sept. 17 – 21, Ducks Mergansers and Coots, excluding Canvasbacks, North Duck Zone

Sept. 24 – 28, Ducks Mergansers and Coots, excluding Canvasbacks, South Duck Zone

October

Oct. 1 - Dec. 2 Turkey Bow only

Oct. 1 - Jan. 31, 2006 Ruffed Grouse

Oct. 1 - March 31, 2006 Pigeon

Oct. 1 - Dec. 2 Deer Bow only

Oct. 1 – 9 Canada goose, North and South Goose Zones

Oct. 1 – Dec. 11, White-fronted geese, North and South Goose Zones

Oct. 1 – Jan. 15 Light geese (white and blue phase snow geese and Ross’ geese) statewide

Oct. 1 – Nov. 14 Woodcock statewide

Oct. 8 - Jan. 31, 2006 Gray Partridge

Oct. 8 – 9 Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days statewide

Oct. 10 - Dec. 2 Turkey Gun/Bow

Oct. 15 - Nov. 30 Crow

Oct. 15 - 23 Deer Early Muzzleloader

Oct. 15 – Dec. 8 Ducks Mergansers and Coots, excluding Canvasbacks, North Duck Zone

Oct. 15 – Dec. 4 Canada geese and Brant North Goose Zone

Oct. 22 – Dec. 15 Ducks Mergansers and Coots, excluding Canvasbacks, South Duck Zone

Oct. 22 – Nov. 20 Canvasbacks North Duck Zone
Oct. 22 - 23 Youth (residents, ages 15 and younger) Rooster Pheasant
Oct. 22 - Dec. 4 Canada geese and Brant South Goose Zone
Oct. 29 – Nov. 27 Canvasback South Duck Zone
Oct. 29 - Dec. 1 Rabbit (Jack)
Oct. 29 - Jan. 10, 2006 Rooster Pheasant
Oct. 29 - Jan. 31, 2006 Bobwhite Quail

November

Nov. 5 - Jan. 31, 2006 Raccoon and Opossum
Nov. 5 - Jan. 31, 2006 Fox (Red and Gray)
Nov. 25 - 27 November Antlerless Deer

December

Dec. 3 - 7 Deer Shotgun 1
Dec. 10 - 18 Deer Shotgun 2
Dec. 19 - Jan. 10, 2006 Deer Bow only
Dec. 19 - Jan. 10, 2006 Turkey Bow only
Dec. 24 – Jan. 2, 2006 Canada geese and Brant North Goose Zone
Dec. 24 – Jan. 9, 2006 Canada geese and Brant South Goose Zone

January 2006

Jan. 11 – 22 January Antlerless Deer only
Jan. 14 – March 31, 2006 Crow
Jan. 16 – April 15, 2006 Light Geese Conservation Order (White and blue phase snow geese and Ross' geese) additional regulations may apply

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MUSSEL BEACH

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

On a hot summer day, you couldn't blame them. People wading the shallows off the wide sandbar had become just heads bobbing in the slow current. It made sense. They could stoop to comb through the sandy substrate. Or they could really get *into* their work. Most chose the latter; floating and pulling their way upstream as their hands felt back and forth for mussels. From the Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Black Hawk County Conservation Department and a local volunteer corps; they were learning to conduct a mussel population survey of this targeted sandbar and nearby river channel. At mid-channel a diver in a wetsuit provided some deep water backup.

And though literally immersed in their work, the results were nothing to brag about. "Historically, about 29 species of mussels have been found in this stretch of the

Cedar River. Today? Well, we found two,” was the word from DNR fisheries biologist Scott Gritters. Workers tallied 20 relatively common ‘pocketbook’ and five ‘pimpleback’ mussels in the meager haul.

The procedure was not complicated. “We are running our hands across the sand. We will feel the shell and pull the clam out of the sand or mud,” explained biologist Denny Weiss. “If it is a live one, about half of it will be imbedded into the substrate. These dead ones will be in any shape or form, laying out on the bottom.”

Another 10 species--ranging from fat mucket, pistol grip, giant floater and white heelsplitter were represented ‘posthumously.’ “Not dead long,” admitted Gritters, as he looked over a somewhat rare ‘Elk Toe.’ “But it would sure be nice to find a live one, to make sure they’re still out there.”

In it’s heyday, the mussel industry was a riverfront heavyweight in Iowa. Button factories thrived in places like Guttenberg and Muscatine prior to World War II and the advent of plastics. Old ‘punched out’ shells still litter the banks. Gritters suspects the Iowa, Wapsipinicon and other interior rivers were just as profitable. Old fisheries records show 25 tons harvested from the Cedar River between 1912-1914. “Prairie streams were once hotbeds for mussels. Some streams were covered from shore to shore. Now, we find just a sprinkling; like here today,” Gritters noted. “If you walk the banks, you see dead shells and maybe think, ‘they’re living around here,’ but actually search for them in the water and it’s a different story.”

Shells—when available--are still used in Asian cultured pearl industry. However, Iowa’s interior streams are closed to clamming and officials are asking that the Mississippi be set off limits, too. Gritters says there is no clamming underway, anyway.

Most people don’t bother thinking about clams. Others assume they are down there ‘out of sight, out of mind,’ perhaps. There is reason for heavy concern, though. “Mussels are a real good indicator of our water quality,” Gritters warns. “They supply food to many fish. Wherever fish are; the riffles, the clean sandbars, there will be mussels. There is really an entire ecosystem down there. If we lose mussels over the long haul that tells us our water quality is somewhat contaminated. And if mussels decline, we know that fish populations do, too.” Most of that contamination is sedimentation; soil runoff. Biologists also suspect pesticides have something to do with the disappearing ecosystem. They know that infestations of zebra mussels have taken a big toll, as well.

A smaller scale search of the Iowa River in Johnson County, a few days after the ‘mussel beach’ search on the Cedar, yielded substantially more mussels, including the rare Pistol Grip and Yellow Sandshell. Still, despite that occasional glimmer of hope, there is no guarantee of long term health. “It’s a huge issue. Over the last decade, up to 90 percent of them have declined,” noted Gritters. “Mussels are in a decline...a *big time* decline.”

Higginseye Research Returns

Mussel researchers return to Iowa City this month to see if their experiment with endangered Higginseye clams has 'taken root' on the Iowa River. It's one of several culturing methods attempted on the Upper Mississippi and its tributaries to save the species. For the past three summers, researchers captured local fish and literally inoculated glochidia--larval mussels--into the gills of fish, duplicating the process that takes place on mussel beds on the river's bottom. They will search prime habitat for small Higginseye, which may have fallen away from their hosts, as well as any signs of natural reproduction.

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GOAL: 1 MILLION MEALS FROM DONATED DEER

DES MOINES - Iowa's bountiful deer population will aid many thousands in need of food through a donation program that is expanding to cover all the state for the coming deer seasons.

The Iowa DNR announced that Help Us Stop Hunger (HUSH) has a goal of 5,000 deer to be donated by hunters during hunting seasons which run from September through part of January. Averaging about 50 pounds of venison per deer will yield 1 million quarter-pound servings, according DNR HUSH coordinator Ross Harrison.

HUSH was designed to encourage deer hunters to shoot more deer to help control the population. Hunters who would normally stop hunting after they had enough venison could keep on hunting and donate their extra deer to Iowans in need. Any of the 95 participating lockers throughout the state receive the deer from hunters and process it into ground venison. The Food Bank of Iowa coordinates delivery of the venison through several hundred social service agencies to those in need.

In its first two pilot years, Harrison reported that HUSH received about 3,100 deer from hunters in about the central one-half of the state. The effort was funded mostly by donations with additional help from the DNR. The Iowa legislature has now added a \$1 deer license surcharge that will generate more than \$325,000, enough to pay lockers \$60 per deer for processing and the Food Bank \$5 per deer for administration and distribution.

"If it were not for the \$1 HUSH surcharge on deer permits, HUSH would remain active in less than half the state," said Jeff Vonk, DNR director. "Hunters can donate any legally taken deer of any sex from any deer season, and we are hopeful they will continue to donate more and more deer to those in need." He said hunters need their regular deer permit to shoot deer for HUSH and that the 5,000-deer goal would be about two percent of the total deer harvested by hunters.

Deer hunters can find a HUSH locker near them by going to www.iowahush.com or from a brochure available where licenses are sold.

Vonk added that the DNR is also working with the Iowa Department of Corrections on a deer donation program for inmates. Details are still under development and will be announced later this fall.

For more information, contact Ross Harrison, HUSH coordinator for the DNR at 515-281-5973, ross.harrison@dnr.state.ia.us

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EXPANDED BOW SEASON FOR HUNTERS IN POLK COUNTY DEER MANAGEMENT ZONE

DES MOINES - Bow hunters with a Polk County management zone deer license may hunt deer from Sept. 15 through Jan. 29, 2006. The goal of this expanded season, approved by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the Polk County Deer Task Force, is to increase deer harvest, particularly does, in this management zone.

“By adding days before and after the November rut, we hope hunters will spend more days in the field and lead to an increased harvest,” said Bill Bunker, wildlife depredation biologist with the Iowa DNR.

As with most outdoor activities, weather is an important factor for hunters. If it is too hot in September, it may not be as inviting to hunters fighting mosquitoes. Warm weather also requires quick and proper care of meat. “On the flip side, it takes a pretty hardy soul to sit in a tree stand in late January in a normal winter,” Bunker said.

Bunker said that while these dates have been approved across the entire management zone, some entities within the zone may have reduced seasons and may not be allowing this early opener.

“It is important that you contact the local administrator before assuming these dates are being utilized,” he said. Those hunting in Urbandale should call 278-3900; hunting in Johnston, call 278-2344; hunting in Polk County Conservation areas, call 323-5363; hunting in Waterworks Park, call 283-8701; hunting the Corps of Engineers land at Saylorville, call 276-4656; and hunting in West Des Moines, call 222-3435.

Each of these entities may also have other conditions and particular areas where hunting is allowed. “Be sure you know the local rules of the hunt,” Bunker said.

For more information, contact Bunker at 641-774-8563.

HUGE VOLUNTEER CLEANUP SET FOR CARTER LAKE IN SEPTEMBER

CARTER LAKE — Volunteers will spend one day next month turning 315 acres of garbage-laden water back into a beautiful lake. Roughly 150 citizens will remove trash from Carter Lake — near Omaha, Neb. — in a huge volunteer cleanup project on Saturday, Sept. 17.

Participants will walk the lake's shores, loading garbage onto canoes and flat-bottom boats. Jet skis will tow the boats to collection points along the lake. A group of six volunteers will remove larger pieces of garbage from the water. If interested, please contact organizers (see below).

The project is the first step towards saving the lake, which has suffered from neglect, dumping and dangerously low water levels over the years, said Steve Wilbur, President of Shoals Homeowner's Association, one of the effort's sponsors.

"With all the garbage that's in the lake, it's a real eyesore," he said. "The beauty of Carter Lake is really tarnished right now."

Area homeowners associations and other groups organized the cleanup, with the help of the Iowa DNR's Keepers of the Land volunteer program. Keepers of the Land provided consultation and technical assistance with waste management, volunteer recruitment and recognition, sponsorship and publicity. The volunteer program offers similar help to other efforts statewide.

Carter Lake cleanup organizers will serve breakfast, lunch and dinner to participants and will provide canoes, trash bags and rubber gloves. Volunteers should bring leather gloves if they have them, wear sturdy shoes and dress appropriately. The workday will conclude with entertainment and a prize drawing — including hotel stays, meals and golf passes donated by local businesses.

Participants will meet at 8 a.m. at Mayberry Park (1701 Willow Dr., Carter Lake) and can sign up for morning or evening, 4-hour shifts (or both). Volunteers are encouraged to attend the second and final community organization meeting at 7 p.m., Tuesday, Sept. 7 at the Carter Lake Public Library. Other volunteer needs include forming 5-6 member cleanup teams, sorting trash, calling sponsors, providing CPR skills and donating boats. Thanks to all involved!

For more information, contact Steven Wilbur at (712) 847-0847 or at sswilbur1@aol.com or Jeanne Eibes at (712) 347-6455.